

SECTION II—CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An optical isolator having an input and an output, the optical isolator comprising:

a phase retardation plate positioned at the input, wherein the phase retardation plate is the first polarization-modifying component encountered by an optical signal entering through the input; and

an optical rotator positioned between the phase-retardation plate and the output, the ~~isolator~~ optical rotator comprising a Faraday rotator positioned between a first polarizer and a second polarizer.
2. (Original) The optical isolator of claim 1 wherein the optical rotator further comprises a second Faraday rotator positioned between the second polarizer and a third polarizer.
3. (Original) The optical isolator of claim 1 wherein the phase retardation plate is a half wave ($\lambda/2$) phase retardation plate.
4. (Original) The optical isolator of claim 1 wherein the phase retardation plate is positioned at a selected angle relative to a light path.
5. (Original) The optical isolator of claim 1, further comprising a polarization-maintaining fiber coupled to the output.
6. (Original) The optical isolator of claim 1, further comprising a polarization-maintaining fiber coupled to the input.
7. (Original) The optical isolator of claim 1, further comprising a radiation source coupled to the input.

8. (Original) The optical isolator of claim 7 wherein the radiation source is a tunable laser.

9. (Currently Amended) A process comprising:

rotating a polarization of an optical signal using a phase retardation plate, wherein the phase retardation plate is the first polarization-modifying component encountered by the optical signal; and

following the rotation of the polarization of the optical signal using a phase retardation plate, further rotating the polarization of the optical signal using an optical rotator.

10. (Original) The process of claim 9 wherein further rotating the polarization of the optical signal comprises:

filtering the optical signal passing through the phase retardation plate;

rotating the filtered optical signal using a Faraday rotator; and

filtering the optical signal passing through the Faraday rotator.

11. (Original) The process of claim 10, wherein the Faraday rotator is a first Faraday rotator, and wherein further rotating the polarization of the optical signal further comprises:

rotating the filtered optical signal using a second Faraday rotator; and

filtering the optical signal passing through the second Faraday rotator.

12. (Original) The process of claim 9 wherein the phase retardation plate is a half-wave ($\lambda/2$) phase retardation plate.

13. (Original) The process of claim 9 further comprising varying the wavelength of the optical signal.

14. (Original) The process of claim 9 further comprising inputting the optical signal to the phase retardation plate using a polarization-maintaining fiber.
15. (Original) The process of claim 9 further comprising outputting the signal from the optical rotator using a polarization maintaining fiber.
16. (Currently Amended) A system comprising:
- ~~a radiation~~ an optical signal source;
 - an optical isolator having an input and an output, the ~~radiation~~ optical signal source being coupled to the input, and the optical isolator comprising:
 - a phase retardation plate positioned at the input, wherein the phase retardation plate is the first polarization-modifying component encountered by the optical signal,
 - an optical rotator positioned after the phase-retardation plate, the optical rotator comprising a first Faraday rotator positioned between a first polarizer and a second polarizer; and
 - a polarization-maintaining fiber connected to the output of the optical isolator
17. (Original) The system of claim 16 wherein the isolator is a first isolator, and further comprising a second Faraday rotator positioned between the second polarizer and a third polarizer.
18. (Original) The optical isolator of claim 16 wherein the radiation source is coupled to the input using a polarization-maintaining fiber.
19. (Original) The system of claim 16 wherein the radiation source is tunable.

20. (Original) The system of claim 16 wherein the radiation source is a laser.
21. (Original) The optical isolator of claim 16 wherein the phase retardation plate is a half wave ($\lambda/2$) phase retardation plate.
22. (Original) The optical isolator of claim 16 wherein the phase retardation plate is positioned at a selected angle relative to a light path.